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ABSTRACT

Developing the lifelong love of reading requires lifetime literacy efforts. Teachers and administrators who support these efforts view the language arts from a "big-picture" perspective but realize that they must act in specific ways. Determining students' attitudes toward reading, giving them experiences with different texts, providing them with opportunities to select resources and to read them in school, and helping them to connect skills and strategies to interesting and meaningful contexts are only a few of the ways that support the lifetime reading habit. Although these activities are beneficial for all developing readers, those who struggle with literacy profit from the extra support of "scaffolding." Scaffolding, however, should not be isolated or reductionistic; instead, it should represent the same instructional direction that is intended for non-disabled learners. (Contains 55 references.) (RS)

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# Struggling Literacy Learners Benefit from Lifetime Literacy Efforts

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J. Sanacore



CS 217 359

All learners benefit from opportunities to develop the lifetime love of reading. Regrettably, some educators believe that students with special needs are unable to read for pleasure and that these students profit more from skills instruction than from reading immersion. Think about the following scenario:

> Jennifer, a second grader, is not reading as well as her peer group. She reads word by word and frequently substitutes words in text with words that do not make sense. Reading is so laborious for Jennifer that she dislikes it. Mr. Clarkson, her classroom teacher who has the best of intentions, provides her with duplicated materials and workbook activities concerning skills; he believes that a foundation in phonics and vocabulary will help her to become a better reader. Several days a week during the morning read-aloud and sharing time, Mr. Clarkson sends Jennifer to the Learning Center for additional skills instruction. He also requires her to meet in a below-level reading group and to read stories from a basal reader while the other children in the classroom select their own materials and engage in sustained silent reading.

Mr. Clarkson (a pseudonym) genuinely assumes that the above scenario is necessary for Jennifer's eventual success in reading. Although no responsible literacy educator would negate the value of acquiring skills, Mr. Clarkson's approach is isolated and reductionistic, and it provides no guarantee that Jennifer and other struggling readers will connect appropriate skills with actual reading. As important, children who are inundated with isolated skills and who are required to leave their classroom during important activities (e.g., read alouds and sharing) are unlikely to enjoy literacy and to become lifetime readers.

**The Importance of Lifetime Literacy Efforts**

Helping students develop the lifelong love of reading increases the chances that they will become literate and will use literacy as an important part of their lifestyles. Using school time to promote the habit of reading provides a number of benefits, especially when authentic literature dominates the literacy program. Not surprisingly, when comparing basals and textbooks with literature-based materials, the latter are more beneficial for stimulating students' interest in reading because these materials (a) blend ideas with poignant narration; (b) present fewer concepts in greater depth; (c) provide more opportunities for responding emotionally and cognitively to text and for enjoying reading as a lifetime activity; (d) support instruction with "real" resources, such as pamphlets, magazines, and trade books; (e) help children personalize and understand content with more facility; (f) present a diversity of themes that can be adapted easily across the curriculum; (g) allow students and educators to drive the curriculum; (h) encourage individual approaches to assessment, such as portfolios, projects, and interactions; and (i) emulate the home environment by encouraging the types of authentic resources that are shared by families (Sanacore, 1993). Literature-based resources not only represent a motivational context for enjoying reading, but also support the development of a positive attitude toward reading as a lifelong activity. When children engage in pleasurable reading each day, they experience the value of reading as efferent and aesthetic processes. Thus, they are more likely to read with a sense of purpose, which further supports their developing reading habit.

This worthwhile habit has important advantages for individuals and for society, because it decreases the incidence of illiteracy and aliteracy. According to Harris and

Hodges (1995), illiteracy is "the inability to read and write a language," and the UNESCO proclamation states that illiteracy is "the inability to use reading and writing with facility in daily life" and that "widespread illiteracy hampers economic and social development; it is also a gross violation of the basic human right to learn, know, and communicate" (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 112; UNESCO, 1988). Estimates of illiteracy vary widely, but Cramer and Castle (1994) suggest that about 20% of American adults are unable to use literacy effectively in their daily lives. While illiteracy impacts negatively on people, aliteracy is probably more insidious. Vacca and Vacca (1999) define aliteracy as "one's lack of a reading habit...especially among those who have the ability to read and write but choose not to" (p. 9). Regrettably, estimates suggest that only about 20% of literate adults read voluntarily and regularly (Cramer & Castle, 1994).

During literacy workshops that I conduct nationwide, I often pose the question: "What are the causes of aliteracy?" Although the responses vary, most workshop participants speculate that the standards and testing initiatives throughout the United States are impacting substantially on curricular and instructional priorities. These participants describe elaborate efforts to align their school-based literacy curriculum to state education department requirements. This narrow direction seems to frustrate educators as they are being coerced to focus more time and energy on classroom activities that help students achieve successfully on state mandated examinations. Since these tests do not include affective considerations, such as developing the love of literacy and the lifetime reading habit, and since test results are published in the media, educators understandably are refocusing their priorities on "teaching for the test" rather than on promoting the love of literacy.

The standards and testing movement, however, should not intimidate teachers and administrators into negating the use of school time for pleasurable reading of authentic literature and instead using this time for skills activities that are aligned with testing requirements. Both actual reading and skill development are major instructional priorities that can complement each other in the context of daily immersion. This immersion is vitally important for providing children with interesting and meaningful experiences that not only nurture lifetime literacy but also encourage opportunities for applying necessary skills. Sustained silent reading, free reading , voluntary reading, independent reading, or recreational reading can help students improve their reading comprehension, vocabulary, phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, writing style, grammatical development, and spelling (Allington, 1975; Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1986; Dahl & Scharer, 2000; Dahl, Scharer, Lawson, & Grogan, 1999; Krashen, 1993; Nagy, 1988; Sanacore, 1994). Although all learners benefit from this context, students in resource rooms and remedial settings have few opportunities to apply skills and strategies to real text because these students are usually completing worksheets (Bean, Cooley, Eichelberger, Lazar, & Zigmond, 1991; Haynes & Jenkins, 1986; Spiegel, 1995). Learners who struggle with literacy also profit from and deserve enriching experiences in reading immersion; however, they may need support in selecting appropriate materials and in remaining on task during reading (Pinnell, 1988). Thus, independent reading time may be more productive when sensitive teachers provide guidance to those who need it. "Helping students locate materials of interest and at desired levels of difficulty is a key aspect to

improving their level of immersion in available printed materials" (Johns & VanLeirsburg, 1994, p.96).

**Supporting Lifetime Literacy Efforts for All Learners**

Promoting the reading habit can have a major impact on children and their future. The following suggestions support this positive direction. Although these suggestions are intended for all students, scaffolds are provided for those who experience difficulty with literacy learning. Scaffolding is a process that helps children or novices to achieve a goal, complete a task, or solve a problem which they would not be able to do without assistance (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). More specifically, scaffolding is "a set of prereading, during-reading, and postreading opportunities and experiences designed to assist a particular group of students in successfully reading, understanding, learning from, and enjoying a particular selection" (Graves & Graves, 1994, p. 2). In the context of fostering the reading habit, educators need to be primarily concerned with highlighting positive experiences and minimizing frustrating encounters with literacy.

**1. Assess students' attitudes toward reading.** Having a positive attitude about reading is linked to achievement in reading (McKenna & Kear, 1990; Walberg & Tsai, 1985). One way of determining attitudes efficiently and reliably is to administer the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS), which is a grades 1-6 instrument developed by McKenna and Kear (1990). This instrument consists of 20 items, with the first 10 focusing on recreational reading and the last 10 highlighting academic reading. The teacher reads aloud each item twice, and the children respond by circling the Garfield comic strip character that best represents their feelings. For example, when responding to

the item. "How do you feel about reading for fun at home?," children may circle the picture of Garfield that is happiest (4 points), slightly smiling (3 points), mildly upset (2 points), or very upset (1 point). After scoring the survey and interpreting the results, teachers should consider intervention strategies.

In one of the elementary schools that I visit frequently, a fifth grade teacher administered the ERAS at the beginning of the school year. The class average for recreational and academic reading suggested that the children were more positive about the former than the latter. Not surprisingly, further inspection of the results indicated that five "included" children who were struggling with their literacy had negative attitudes toward both their recreational and academic reading. After reviewing the results, the teacher and I developed a classroom plan that involved intervention strategies, such as reading aloud authentic literature at the beginning and end of each school day; expanding the classroom library to include a wide variety of narrative and expository resources that are meaningful and interesting; allowing children to select resources in which they were interested; allotting 30 minutes each day for sustained silent reading; and providing readers with opportunities to share literacy experiences with classmates. The fifth graders' excitement about literacy was evident throughout the school year. In June, the teacher administered the ERAS again and compared class averages from the two assessments. This comparison indicated that the children improved their attitudes toward both recreational and academic reading, with greater gains noted in academic reading. Furthermore, the five included learners improved substantially, probably because their initial scores were considerably lower than their peers. In a sense, the use of the ERAS was an effective means of determining the attitudinal impact of the intervention

strategies. The positive outcomes sent a clear message to both teacher and students that the classroom plan had value and should be continued.

**Scaffolds:** The five included children who struggled with literacy often needed special support in the areas of assessment and instruction. For these children, the teacher administered the ERAS during individual conferences. After reading each item twice, she occasionally pointed to each picture of Garfield and provided a reminder of the mood it represented: very happy, a little happy, a little upset, and very upset. Because the ERAS is a norm-referenced instrument, the teacher was aware that it should be administered with procedures that are comparable to those used with the norming group (McKenna & Kear, 1990). Otherwise, aspects of validity and reliability could be compromised. Although the ERAS was field-tested with groups rather than individuals, the teacher believed that its individual use with the five included children was effective for determining their attitudes about recreational and academic reading, for providing appropriate intervention strategies, and for monitoring attitudinal changes. When estimating attitudinal changes for these struggling learners, the teacher adhered to McKenna and Kear's advice:

> Estimating year-long changes for individual students is a less reliable process and should only be attempted with regard to the standard error of measurement for a given subscale and grade level [provided in the article]. We recommend using twice the standard error to construct an adequate confidence interval. In other words, the pre/post difference would, in general, need to be 5 points or more on either the academic or recreational

subscale before *any* real change could be assumed. On the total score, the pre/post change would need to be 7 or 8 points. (p. 629)

Determining students' attitudes toward reading, through either formal or informal instruments, sets the stage for promoting the lifelong love of reading.

**2. Create partnerships with narrative and expository texts.** Children benefit from a variety of experiences with both narrative (storybook) and expository (informational) texts. At the primary level, this balance provides a foundation for responding successfully to different content-area resources and activities, and it increases the chances that students will be comfortable with different textual assignments as they progress through the grades. Because success with literacy tends to support subsequent success with literacy, students are more likely to enjoy reading as an important part of their lifestyles.

One way of enhancing students' understanding and enjoyment of different types of text is to pair narrative and expository trade books concerning the same topic. Sometimes referred to as Twin Texts, this partnership can create excitement about learning as it capitalizes on children's fascination with facts (Camp, 2000) and encourages their personal interaction with a content area (Vacca & Vacca, 1999). Many informational trade books use conversational tone similar to narrative books and, thus, can make subject matter come alive. In addition, "the use of Twin Texts is a viable method for both teaching and learning critical reading and thinking skills" (Camp, 2000, p. 400). For younger readers, sample Twin Texts include Janell Cannon's *Stellaluna* (fiction) and Celia Bland's *Bats* (nonfiction). For older readers, examples of Twin Texts are Ellen White's *Voyage on the Great Titanic: The Diary of Margaret Ann Brady*

(fiction) and Robert Ballard's *Ghost Liners* (nonfiction). Students are more apt to have successful and enjoyable experiences with this fiction/nonfiction partnership when they connect Twin Texts with interactive strategies that are meaningful and challenging. These strategies include the Venn diagram, K-W-L chart, directed reading-thinking activity, directed listening-thinking activity, webbing, and prior knowledge activation (Camp, 2000). Children also need easy access to a wide variety of authentic literature; updated information trade books, in particular, "should constitute approximately one-fourth to one-half of the classroom library collection at every grade level. Information books selected should address a wide range of topics and encompass many different levels of difficulty" (Moss, Leone, Dipillo, 1997, p. 420).

**Scaffolds:** In a sense, Twin Texts, their connections with interactive strategies, and a well-balanced classroom library already serve as scaffolds because they ease the transition from narrative to expository texts. Learners who struggle with literacy, however, may need extra support. Fortunately, a growing number of trade books blend both storybook and informational texts, and this interesting mixture provides a smoother transition from narration to exposition. Examples of this blended format include Joanna Cole's *The Magic School Bus* series, Tomie de Paola's *The Popcorn Book*, and Loreen Leedy's *Postcards from Pluto: A Tour of the Solar System* (Camp, 2000). Because content text consists of passages with substantial factual material and related vocabulary, struggling learners appreciate the blended format which provides a familiar and comfortable context as a vehicle for pursuing important content.

When students develop a reasonable understanding of the differences between narrative and expository texts, they benefit from reading and writing experiences that

encourage recognition and understanding of different expository types. The most common expository types are description, sequence, comparison, cause-effect, and problem-solution (Meyer & Freedle, 1984; Tompkins, 1994). Although all children need exposure to these and other textual patterns, struggling learners profit from explicit instruction in applying graphic organizers to different patterns. During individual conferences or small-group meetings, the teacher should demonstrate the application of a graphic organizer to an appropriate passage. Initially, underlining cue words may be helpful in revealing an intended text structure. For example, such cues as *first, second, third, next, then,* and *finally* may signal sequence, whereas cues like *different, in contrast, alike, same as,* and *on the other hand* may signal comparison (Tompkins, 1994). When students are able to identify the cues that indicate different textual patterns, they should be weaned from the underlining process and be given opportunities to apply their knowledge to interesting, meaningful passages. This instructional direction helps students to become independent as it increases their potential for understanding, appreciating, and using a variety of text throughout their lives.

3. **Encourage literacy learners to select materials in which they are interested and to read them during school time.** Becoming independent, lifetime readers requires exposure to a balanced classroom library consisting of narrative and expository materials, including big books, little books, audiobooks, readalongs, large-print materials, poetry anthologies, picture books, illustrated books, bibliotherapeutic stories, chapter books, "how-to" manuals, dictionaries, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, comics, and computer software. During the school day, children need to browse the classroom library without being hurried or harried and to choose materials that are well-matched with their

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reading and interest levels. Encouraging and respecting children's choices are important steps toward helping them develop a sense of ownership and self-determination (Kohn, 1993; Sanacore, 1999).

After selecting appropriate materials, students should be given uninterrupted blocks of time to enjoy them. Sustained silent reading (SSR), Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), voluntary reading, free reading, recreational reading, and independent reading are among the essential ways of organizing time for immersion in reading. This daily immersion supports the developing habit of reading, which is the foundation for lifetime literacy. Although using school time for pleasurable reading is important in elementary, middle, and high school settings, students seem to have less opportunities to read for pleasure as they progress through the grades. Attending 40-minute content-area classes, having minimal access to exciting classroom libraries, and engaging in curricular activities that are aligned to state standards and assessments are only a few of the reasons why an increasing number of middle and high school students do not read in school. According to Ivey and Broaddus (2000),

> …pressures from high-stakes testing create confusion over what ought to be taught in reading programs. In our recent work in reading and language arts classrooms, we have observed teachers not only teaching skills for taking comprehension tests, but also covering topics and content that appear on test passages as opposed to focusing on the kind of instruction that would lead students toward becoming lifelong, independent readers. (p. 76)

Ironically, early adolescents often prefer not to read during free time, but they value opportunities to read in school and are more likely to read when they have time for this

activity, when they have access to varied reading materials, and when they have more choice over what they read (Ivey & Broaddus, 1999, 2000; Sanacore, 1994, 1999, 2000; Stewart, Paradis, Ross, & Lewis, 1996; Worthy & McKool, 1996).

**Scaffolds:** Some children experience difficulty selecting materials to read during independent reading time. Even a well-organized classroom library can represent such a confusing maze that locating appropriate resources becomes a frustrating process. These children need a sensitive teacher who provides them with a few books that are well-matched with their reading and interest levels, thus making the selection process more manageable. Then, the teacher should meet with these individuals and provide them with demonstrations of "How to Pick a Book by Hand," which is a six-step plan suggested by Castle (1994). The following adaptation of the plan can be used by teachers as they demonstrate a workable approach to choosing appropriate books (Sanacore, 1999). Specifically, the teacher thinks aloud as he/she (a) picks a book that seems to be readable; (b) selects a page near the middle of the book; (c) reads it to himself/herself; (d) holds up a finger for each unfamiliar word; (e) holds up four fingers and a thumb, suggesting that the book may be too difficult; (f) repeats the same process with a different page, and if the material is still too hard, chooses another book. After demonstrating the use of these six steps, children need guided practice in applying them to different materials. This application, however, should be flexible since "some books may be very difficult to read, but because they are so interesting students decide to read them anyway" (Tompkins & McGee, 1993, p. 278).

In addition to the six-step plan, Primeaux' (1999, 2000) research findings suggest that struggling readers need guidance in recognizing their reading interests. In her study,

students not only selected appropriate books but also read these books to completion when they received explicit instruction and guidance in using a variety of selection criteria. For example, they looked at the book cover, glanced at the number of pages, read the back-cover reviews, read sections of the book, were familiar with the author, identified the genre, recognized the book title, and accepted a recommendation from a peer, teacher, or another adult.

After selecting appropriate materials, students need time to read them. Because a given selection can vary in text structure, content, and vocabulary, children may encounter obstacles and, therefore, profit from support systems that help them achieve success. Among these support systems is paired reading (Topping, 1987a, 1987b, 1989), which is a worthwhile interactive tutoring approach that involves the pairing of a tutor (an adult or a child who is a fluent reader) with a tutee (someone who is a less fluent reader). The pair read aloud together, with the tutor adapting his/her reading speed to the tutee's reading rate; with practice, synchrony is achieved. When the text is difficult and the tutee miscues, the tutor says the word correctly and requests the tutee to say the corrected version too. Then, the pair resume reading together. When the text is easier and the tutee can read it independently, he/she signals the tutor with a prearranged, nonverbal motion to stop reading. At this point, the tutee continues reading aloud independently, while receiving praise and engaging in discussion about challenging words. If the tutee struggles with the recognition of another word for five seconds, the tutor says the word correctly, and both tutor and tutee continue reading together (Topping, 1989). Paired reading is an important source of support because it is a collaborative activity, it takes place within the context of a child's chosen material, it

helps reduce some of the frustration associated with becoming a proficient, fluent reader, and it promotes positive conditions for developing the reading habit.

**4. Connect skills to contexts that are interesting and meaningful.** Learners need opportunities to connect decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension skills to "real" reading situations. This focus on context makes more sense to students than learning skills through exercises that are detached from reading materials. Fortunately, the perspectives of professional literature and classroom practice provide useful insights for incorporating skills and strategies into literacy-learning activities.

For example, Trachtenburg (1990) highlights a whole-part-whole approach for combining the strengths of literature and phonics. She also presents a sample lesson consisting of three steps. Briefly described, *Step 1 (Whole)* involves the teacher reading aloud an authentic piece of literature; *Step 2 (Part)* concerns instruction in a phonic element by connecting it to the preceding work of literature, reinforcing it with additional activities, and engaging children in guided practice of the skill; and *Step 3 (Whole)* centers on the teacher presenting a new book that contains examples of the skill and giving capable readers the opportunity to read the book independently. Trachtenburg also presents a list of trade books that repeat short and long vowel sounds. These books include Dr. Seuss' *The Cat in the Hat* and Molly Bang's *The Paper Crane*. Although this instructional approach has merit, it should not be used with all children, all phonic elements, or all literature selections. Rather its strength lies in its selective application to high-frequency phonic elements or skills and to individual children who need this instruction (Trachtenburg, 1990). Complementing this perspective is Morrow's (2001) *Literacy Development in the Early Years: Helping Children Read and Write*, which

includes an extensive list of children's books for building sound-symbol relationships, including consonants, short and long vowels, digraphs, and word families. In addition, Weaver's (1994) *Reading Process and Practice: From Socio-Psycholinguistics to Whole Language* includes a list of children's books with interesting sound elements.

Context is also important for promoting vocabulary development. Becoming immersed in a wide variety of materials nurtures a growing knowledge of vocabulary, which, in turn, nurtures comprehension of text. According to Nagy (1988), extensive reading provides three necessary aspects of vocabulary instruction: (a) integration (understanding new information requires connecting it to prior knowledge), (b) repetition (having substantial exposure and facility with words results in greater attention given to comprehension), and (c) meaningful use (using new words in the context of reading is more effective than experiencing these words in isolation). Reading connected text as a condition for expanding word knowledge sets the stage for instructional activities that foster an understanding of and appreciation for the power of context. Supporting this direction are caring teachers who work collaboratively with students, immersing them in authentic resources and in useful activities that foster the following contextual insights Sanacore (1994):

- Certain words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs help to determine the meaning of some new words and concepts.
- Reading whole selections increases an awareness that thorough knowledge of all words is unimportant.

- Context can support other approaches to learning unfamiliar words independently [for example, certain words consisting of prefixes, roots, and suffixes do no reveal meaning on the basis of word structure].
- For comprehension to occur, vocabulary and prior knowledge must interact.
- The intonation a reader brings to a text can affect the importance and meaning of words.

Although these and similar insights are important, teachers should not overdo activities that promote them because too much instructional time devoted to such activities could displace independent reading and even negate its positive intent. Moreover, some readers do not need instruction in understanding the power of context for grasping the meanings of words because these individuals have already engaged in wide and varied reading and, thus, have natural intuition concerning the value and uses of context. Finally, stressing the importance of context "is not intended to take the place of explicit vocabulary instruction. Sensitive teachers work cooperatively with their students in deciding when word knowledge needs to be taught directly and when it is learned adequately through book immersion" (Sanacore, 1994).

Reading and sharing books that are meaningful and interesting also provide a natural context for practicing comprehension. Through reading, children experience the many dimensions of different texts and, thus, have opportunities to respond in a variety of ways. They can read with an aesthetic stance for a lived-through experience, which involves feelings, images, thoughts, and associations that are evoked during reading. In addition, children can read efferently, with the intent of carrying away information. Not surprisingly, reading experiences require a balance of aesthetic and efferent responses

because readers usually do not read poems and stories with an exclusive aesthetic intent, nor do they read informational content with a fixed efferent purpose (Rosenblatt, 1978,1991; Tompkins, 1998). Thus, while becoming immersed in Bette Green's *Summer of My German Soldier*, individuals can enjoy this novel for its aesthetic and emotional impact and also can learn valuable information about World War II German prisoners being held in the United States. This type of experience helps readers to personalize history through literature and simultaneously to learn interesting facts that are sometimes not found in textbooks (Sanacore, 1993).

Learning to assume aesthetic and efferent stances is facilitated by daily reading and sharing of varied literature, especially if the literature-based experiences are structured by Text Sets. These sets are similar to Twin Texts (Camp, 2000) as they are collections of materials that encourage the use of several genres—poems, stories, and informational sources—for learning about a topic (Tompkins, 1998). Text Sets are also useful for increasing students' understanding of different text structures and for providing opportunities to assume different stances. Tompkins (1998) presents examples of Text Sets for a primary-grade unit on insects, a middle-grade unit on cowboys, and an upper-grade unit on the Middle Ages. Each Text Set provides three genres of authentic literature: stories, informational books, and books of poetry. For example, the Text Set on insects includes Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (story), Margery Facklam's *Creepy Crawly Caterpillars* (informational book), and Joan Ryder's *Where Butterflies Grow* (book of poetry). After reading widely in the different genres while assuming different stances, students benefit from opportunities to share these experiences. Sharing is especially effective when learners engage in a variety of

interactive activities, such as whole-class discussions, literature circles, individual conferences, readers' theater, panel discussions, role playing, literature logs, drawings and illustrations, and collaborative research projects.

The above considerations highlight reading immersion as an empowering context for helping many readers improve their decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension. These considerations, however, are neither exclusive to their designated areas nor comprehensive. For instance, using the whole-part-whole approach and assuming aesthetic and efferent stances structured by Text Sets can be equally effective for supporting the graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic cueing systems. Moreover, the professional literature suggests a wide variety of reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities that reinforce the value of context for promoting growth in decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension. Among the many useful sources are Dahl and Scharer (2000), Goodman, Hood, and Goodman (1991), Laminack and Wood (1996), and Weaver (1994, 1996). As educators continue to apply insights gained from these and other sources, they demonstrate to children that meaningful and interesting contexts can support both proficiency in and enjoyment of literacy learning. Positive side effects are that students are more likely to understand the importance of learning skills and strategies (without the drudgery that accompanies isolated, reductionistic instruction) and to use literacy for the rest of their lives.

**Scaffolds:** Although these efforts support literacy learners in "big-picture" ways, children who struggle with literacy need extra support. Explicit instruction, however, should not be construed as a "drill-skill-kill" perspective. This narrow response to the learning needs of struggling readers represents a lack of equity and equality of

educational opportunity, especially when it is compared with the type of response that usually accommodates the literacy needs of "normally" developing readers. All students profit from learning skills and strategies in a context that is meaningful and interesting, but individuals with special needs benefit from a modified structure.

Thus, the teacher can meet with a small, mixed-ability group for an adapted shared reading experience of an engaging book with predictable language. During this experience which supports a whole-part-whole sequence, struggling literacy learners should sit close to the teacher so they have a better view of the text and illustrations. Initially *(whole)*, the teacher motivates the group to make predictions about the book's title, cover, and illustrations. He/She then reads the story while demonstrating intonation—pitch, stress, and juncture—and simultaneously pointing to the words. The teacher also invites the children to chorally read some of the predictable language (for example, the repeated refrains) and to confirm their predictions. From these eclectic activities, children are able to gauge the reading act as semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic as they make predictions, confirm or disconfirm their predictions, make new predictions, experience grammatical aspects of predictable language, and recognize a variety of words with their contextual meanings and phonic elements.

When individuals have difficulty with the meaning or recognition of certain words or when the teacher determines that certain high-frequency words require more attention, a strong opportunity prevails for a focused skill lesson *(part)*. This "teachable moment" is well-timed because the children already enjoyed the book from a meaning-making perspective and are more likely to be piqued emotionally and cognitively. Learning about skills directly connected to this work of literature makes more sense now

as the teacher helps these developing readers connect their prior knowledge to the book's context. To illustrate, after sharing Audrey Wood's *The Napping House*, the children might focus on the interesting words used to build the story's incremental refrain: *wakeful flea, slumbering mouse, snoozing cat, dozing dog, dreaming child, snoring granny, cozy bed,* and *napping house.* These vivid words can stimulate an enriching discussion of their unique meanings and phonic elements and can motivate children to think about other words with similar meanings and phonic elements. During this discussion, the teacher should provide the children—especially the struggling learners—with sufficient wait time so they can activate their prior knowledge and connect it to the current activity. Supporting this word-building activity is a growing word wall, which includes some of the vivid words from *The Napping House* as well as words from the children's prior knowledge.

With such an enriching experience, the small, mixed-ability group is able to successfully apply newly gained insights about language to a new context *(whole).* Text Sets or Twin Texts provide a useful context for transfer of learning because different books about the same topic usually repeat similar content words with their unique orthography (as well as new words). Fortunately, poems and informational books are plentiful concerning fleas (or insects), mice (or rodents), cats and dogs (or mammals), dreaming, snoring, cozy, and napping. This reinforcement in the context of engaging literature is beneficial for many children but is especially needed for individuals who struggle with literacy.

A similar shared experience can take place with older children who are studying an instructional unit, such as the American Revolution. These students can profit from

quality literature like Avi's *The Fighting Ground*, which is a poignantly written, action-packed novel of a 13-year old boy who learns about the realities of getting involved in war. Afterward, the students benefit from exposure to poems and informational sources concerning the American Revolution. More discussion about shared reading is provided by Holdaway (1970, 1982), Sanacore (1992), Sanacore and Wilsusen (1995), Short, Harste, and Burke (1996), and others.

**Helping All Literacy Learners Become Lifetime Learners**

Developing the lifelong love of reading requires lifetime literacy efforts. Teachers and administrators who support these efforts view the language arts from a "big-picture" perspective but realize that they must act in specific ways. Determining students' attitudes toward reading, giving them experiences with different texts, providing them with opportunities to select resources and to read them in school, and helping them to connect skills and strategies to interesting and meaningful contexts are only a few of the ways that support the lifetime reading habit. Although these activities are beneficial for all developing readers, those who struggle with literacy profit from extra support. Scaffolding, however, should not be isolated or reductionistic; instead, it should represent the same instructional direction that is intended for non-disabled learners.

Because of space limitations as well as the scope of this article, other considerations for promoting lifetime literacy efforts have not been highlighted. Foremost is reading aloud to children at least once each day. According to Castle (1994, p.17), "I can think of no more powerful way for teachers to foster a love of reading than to read to, with, about, and in front of children." Although reading aloud was presented

in my discussion of the whole-part-whole sequence, it should be a major experience in children's literacy learning as they progress through the grades (Richardson, 2000; Sanacore, 1996; Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996). Other important considerations include building resilience in literacy learners, finding time to engage children in pleasurable reading across the curriculum, making picture books acceptable and respectable for older students, guiding students to solve authentic problems through reading, conducting book talks, encouraging different interpretations of text, supporting a variety of projects and outcomes, and promoting leisure reading at home. Educators who consider these and other areas will take pride in observing future generations of citizens who not only are able to read but also *want* to read.

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